

# 'ANGUS BARKS'

By Jeff Francis  
AEG Executive Board

## *2008 review – 2009 outlook*

**GRIEVANCES-** Early last year there were a half dozen serious grievances at Aircraft Step II concerning management doing bargaining unit work. Stewards in Plants I & II pursued this issue aggressively. By mid-year we had made some headway. The worst offending manager no longer works for GE. Another manager was notified that Corporate Relations wants a report directly from the Union the next time he's caught doing production follower work. Also, we got an off-shift clerk hired for Plant I, which has been a big plus for both the Union and the Company.

Throughout 2008, the Union discussed and resolved many individual cases concerning start rates, progression rates and pay rates. More importantly, we addressed some issues that affect all members, and the health of the plant.

At the start of 2008, the Company planned to provide in-plant training for R17 skills, NC programming, tig welding, and R19 machining. The first program was completed, but the others were delayed. The NC programming was posted and is ready to launch, but is currently on hold. Training is an issue everywhere, as one generation of workers moves towards retirement, and another generation moves up the upgrade ladder. Since the demise of the apprentice program, it's hard to get training funded from operational budgets that have constant cost pressures. Corporate should provide separate funding for in-plant training.

Our grievance requesting an electronic job posting system sparked some constructive dialogue. An electronic application form has been drafted, and once approved, will be piloted on shop floor terminals. If successful, this could help solve the age-old problems with paper applications being lost, mis-filed, etc.

During 2008 all our Gearplant members who came across the tracks landed in openings, so none of our Aircraft members lost their classification as a result of a Gearplant move. That will be harder to do in 2009.

**WORKLOAD-** Several presentations by management to your stewards and union officers, show enough work currently on the books for 2009 to keep hourly manpower levels stable in Plants I & II. Built into that plan is some significant farm-in of work we don't currently do. We now have some modern machinery, and seven new machines arrived at year-end. Where new work can be developed in new machinery, the Union is very interested in supporting those efforts. If you are involved in a farm-in project, keep your union reps updated on any progress or problems during the year.

In the next month you will hear a lot about management headcount cuts. 2009 will be an uncertain year, but don't get distracted by rumors about layoffs, hiring, overtime, etc. Corporate will need manufacturing profits (your labor) this year. If you need the facts, talk to your steward.

Our biggest hurdle in 2009 is how to come up with enough open jobs to absorb our members on layoff from the Gearplant. That's why farm-in projects are key. Given the global economic recession, our goal is to protect our lowest seniority members from hitting the street. In the Union (unlike management), we sink or swim as a group. If we get through 2009 with our group intact, but individuals receive less overtime, then that will be a success story. When the economy eventually turns around, we want our plant positioned with the equipment and talent to take advantage of an upswing. Plan your household budget accordingly.

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